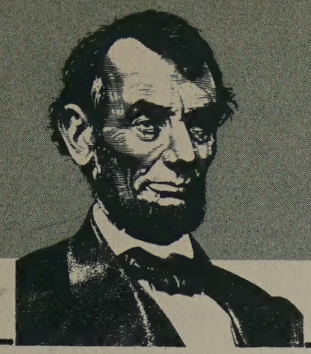


# Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1434 FORT WAYNE, INDIANA August, 1957


## CAMPAIGN BIOGRAPHIES
### "UNAUTHORIZED"

With the nomination of Abraham Lincoln for the presidency on the Republican ticket quite a few biographers and agents of publishing houses went to Springfield, Illinois, in late May and early June of 1860 to arrange for an "authorized" life of the "Railsplitter."

It was to be expected that several campaign lives would be hurriedly written and rushed to the presses in order to influence the voter in the immediate contest. Lincoln's cooperation was necessary and he wrote some autobiographical sketches which contained the fundamental facts for a campaign life.

The insistent desire of so many biographers to write Lincoln's life prompted John G. Nicolay, the nominee's private secretary, to prepare the following form letter in reply to their many inquiries:

Springfield --- 1860

Dear Sir:

Your letter to Mr. Lincoln of -- by which you ask his assistance in getting up a biographical sketch of him is received. Applications of this class are so numerous that it is simply impossible for him to attend to them.

Yours & c
J. G. Nicolay

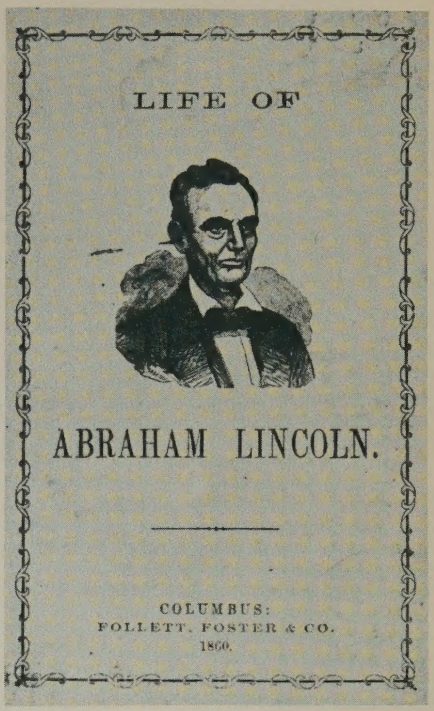
More than a dozen writers published Lincoln campaign lives, mostly in cheap editions, reaching a possible total of 100,000 or more copies. Considered as campaign trash these biographies were largely discarded as soon as the election was over. The copies extant have been widely dispersed and "no public or private library has ever contained a complete set."

One of Lincoln's autobiographical sketches was made available to William Dean Howells, a twenty-three year old editorial writer with the *Ohio State Journal*, who perhaps was unofficially promised by a New York member of the Republican National Committee the assignment of writing the "authorized" biography.

Most of the research for the Howells "Life" was done by a twenty year old law student, James Quay Howard. The final first product was a publication of one hundred-seventy pages, ninety-four of which were devoted to the nominee, with additional pages pertaining to the Chicago Convention, Mr. Lincoln's speeches, and a biographical sketch of Hannibal Hamlin, the Republican vice-presidential candidate. Later editions bound in cloth boards numbering more than four hundred pages were issued with an extended text on Hamlin by John L. Hayes.

Howells' publisher, Follett, Foster & Company, of Columbus, Ohio, asserted in their advertising announcements, that their biography was "Authorized by Mr. Lincoln." This announcement prompted Nicolay to write a sharp letter to the publishers, dated June 15, 1860:

"Gentlemen: I was certainly very much surprised on seeing that in the 'slip' advertisements you enclosed me, you announced that your biography of Mr. Lincoln was '*authorized*'; and certainly astonished beyond degree that in a late card you say that 'finally the thread of our narrative is furnished by Mr. Lincoln's private secretary, from Mr. Lincoln's own recollections, and our biography is authorized *by Mr. Lincoln.* He had authorized no other.' Also that you write me under date of the 12th that 'Mr. Howard thinks there can be no question as to our full and complete *authority to announce* that ours is fully authorized.'




**Howells' Biography**
**M. 43**

"As I telegraphed you today, in all these assertions you are wrong. Neither Mr. Lincoln nor myself ever said or did anything, which could give Mr. Howard or yourselves any reason to suppose you had such 'authority'; on the contrary, Mr. Lincoln told Mr. Howard, in my presence, that there must be no word or intimation that any of the facts or matter furnished, came from him or by authority. In addition to this Mr. Howard *knew* that I should give at least three other gentlemen precisely the same facts and material that I gave to him, and that consequently he could not possibly have the exclusive authority claimed in your card.

"If Mr. Lincoln could have foreseen this wrangle over an 'authority' which he never gave, he certainly would have left *all* biographers to their own resources, and spared himself the labor and annoyance he incurred, to say nothing of the mortification of finding his *express* wish and direction disregarded, and a sought confidence violated. He certainly never dreamed of thus seeing himself and his private secretary paraded as parties to a seeming favoritism which his whole effort has been to avoid.

"Please therefore to recall your announcements that your biography is in any way authorized by himself or his private secretary, or that either has furnished you

'material'. As I telegraphed you, Mr. Lincoln neither *authorizes* yours or any other biography of himself."

The same day that Lincoln's secretary wrote the Ohio publishers, Howard wrote Nicolay presenting his side of the question in regard to the so-called authorization. From Springfield, on June 19, 1860, Nicolay wrote Howard:

"Dear Sir: Yours of the 15th reached me last night, and I proceeded at once to a brief reply. In addition to what I have already telegraphed and written to Follett & Foster, I will only quote two extracts from your own letter which fully answer the other portions of the same viz.:

" 'I never understood that Mr. Lincoln was in any manner to *father* or be responsible for, this life or anything that it contained.'

"That is true; but don't you see that Follett & Foster's advertisements and card do make Mr. Lincoln *'father'* and *'responsible for'* this life?

"And again you say:

" 'Mr. Lincoln told me that the materials he furnished us should not be so used in the biography as to indicate that they came from him.'

"By what kind of reasoning then could you suppose that he was willing to have the source of these 'materials' *indicated* outside of biography, as in the cards and advertisements for instance? Mr. Lincoln was even more explicit; in my presence he told you 'that there must be no word or intimations that this (material) came from him.' And yet, in spite of this express direction of his, and which you substantially acknowledge it is boldly announced in a card that *'the thread of the narrative is furnished by Mr. Lincoln's private secretary from Mr. Lincoln's own recollections, and the biography is authorized by Mr. Lincoln, and that he had authorized no other.'*

"A word as to the *delay* of which you complain. The time and manner of the publication was entirely at the option of Follett & Foster, free entirely from any control or influence on the part of Mr. Lincoln he having never given any advice, suggestion or direction in regard to it, and being therefore neither directly nor impliedly responsible for any such delay.

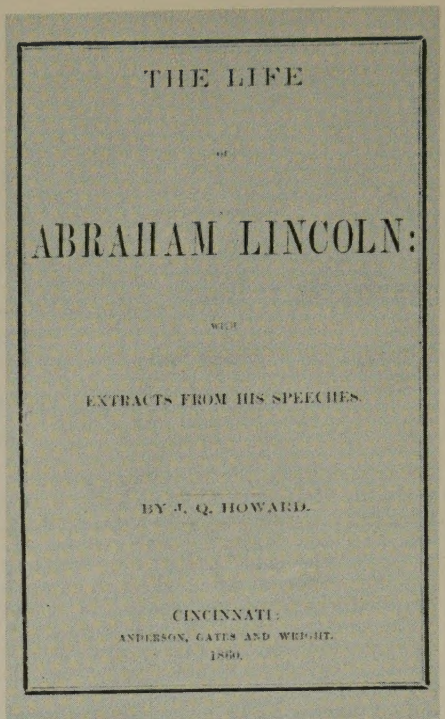
"Neither can I undertake to determine whether you or Follett & Foster have done wrong; I only know that their announcements are at variance with the instructions you received—I cannot undertake to decide who is in the fault.

"I hope that a sober second thought has convinced both yourself and Follett & Foster that Mr. Lincoln *cannot* act other wise in this matter than he has done. He cannot *'authorize' 'endorse'* or *'be responsible for'* the book as a whole, because he does not know what it contains; nor can he authorize any particular fact or facts without distinctly *specifying* them, and thus in effect, writing an autobiography—a thing which you certainly cannot ask him to do. How could you disclaim his responsibility for the book when at the same time you claim authority for the *'facts, incidents,* and *narrative'*? Are these not the *'contents'* of the book?

"If the style and appearance of the book—the reputation of the author—the character of the publishers, and their connection with the Lincoln-Douglas debates—the fact of their sending an agent here to gather materials and information—the announcement that such men as Yates, Stuart, Butler & others, the early friends and companions of Mr. Lincoln were the sources of his history, and that he had access to the public files and records at Mr. Lincoln's city, be not enough to give your book character and preference over the Rand & Carlton and other flash editions of his life, then I do not know how it can be adequately endorsed.

"For myself I am extremely sorry this misunderstanding has arisen, and particularly so that it should have grown out of the consent of Mr. Lincoln to oblige Messers. Follett & Foster, as far as he could, and in spite of his extra precautions to prevent it.

"Mr. Lincoln entertains the highest regards and kindest feelings for yourself and Messrs. Follett & Foster but you must not refuse to see that he being the Republican Nominee for President, and being responsible to his Party for the utmost discretion and care about


THE LIFE

OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN:

WITH

EXTRACTS FROM HIS SPEECHES.

BY J. Q. HOWARD.

CINCINNATI:
ANDERSON, GATES AND WEIGHT.
1860.

**Howard's Biography**
**M. 42**

**The title page bears the imprint "Columbus: Follett, Foster and Company".**

every word and act of his own, it would be an act of inexcusable folly to lend his express or implied authority to the whole or part of a book of whose contents he knows nothing. He will not consent to do so for himself, and his friends would not permit it were he willing.

"Please show this to Messers. Follett & Foster, as it answers both your letter and theirs to me, and as I have not time to copy it."

Follett, Foster and Company's claim also aroused Lincoln and certain Ohio Republican leaders. Samuel Galloway inquired of Lincoln concerning authorization and suggested that Lincoln read proof sheets of Howells' biography. Then too, Howard was considered too radical in his anti-slavery views and there was a possibility that he might have incorporated something in his notes that would be offensive to Conservative Republicans.

Howard had spent several days in Springfield, where he received from Lincoln a copy of the biographical material which he had prepared for John Locke Scripps of the *Chicago Press* and *Tribune*. Likewise, Howard had interviewed Lincoln's close friends and spent considerable time in the files of the *Sangamo Journal* and the *Journal* of the General Assembly of Illinois.

Apparently, Howard was so cordially received by Lincoln and was so successful in compiling data with the help and cooperation of Nicolay, that he began to believe that the Howells "life" was actually authorized, if not in name at least in fact.

Lincoln replied to Galloway on June 19th, in a letter marked "Especially Confidential:"

"My dear Sir: Your very kind letter of the 15th is received. Messrs. Follett, Foster & Co's Life of me is *not* by my authority; and I have scarcely been so much astounded by anything, as by their public announcement that it is authorized by me. They have fallen into some strange misunderstanding. I certainly knew they contemplated publishing a biography, and I certainly did not object to their doing so, *upon their own responsibility.* I even took pains to facilitate them. But, at the same time, I made myself tiresome, if not hoarse, with repeating to Mr. Howard, their only agent seen by me, my protest that I *authorized nothing*—would be *respons-*

*ible for nothing.* How, they could so misunderstand me, passes comprehension. As a matter, *wholly my own,* I would authorize no biography, without *time,* and *opertunity* to carefully examine and consider every word of it; and, in this case, in the nature of things, I can have no such time and opertunity. But, in my present position, when, by the lessons of the past, and the united voice of all discreet friends, I am neither (to) write or speak a word for the public, how dare I send forth, by my authority, a volume of hundreds of pages, for adversaries to make points upon without end. Were I to do so, the convention would have a right to reassemble, and substitute another name for mine.

"For these reasons, I would not look at the proof sheets. I am determined to maintain the position of truly saying I never saw the proof sheets, or any part of their work, before it's publication.

"Now, do not mistake me. I feel great kindness for Messrs. F. F. & Co—do not think they have intentionally done wrong. There may be nothing wrong in their proposed book. I sincerely hope there will not. I barely suggest that you, or any of the friends there, on the party account, look it over, & exclude what you may think would embarrass the party—bearing in mind, at all times, that I *authorize nothing*—will be *responsible for* nothing."

The advertising slogan "Authorized by Mr. Lincoln" was eventually changed by Follett, Foster and Company to read "accurate and reliable." Once the biography was published on June 27, 1860 (Monaghan 43) it was evident that Howells did not utilize very much of the material supplied by Howard. Instead, the biographer leaned heavily on previously published campaign lives, incorporating into his pages some of the errors made by the other biographers.

The most grievous error committed by Howells, which could not be attributed to Howard, appeared in the first issues of the book on page 74, in regard to resolutions drawn up by "A Mass State Convention, held in Springfield, in October." In correcting a published copy of the biography, Lincoln wrote: "Not the resolution of that convention. See debates at Ottawa, Freeport & Galesburg."

The other minor errors were of no political importance. The publishers were able to correct the glaring error, only after thousands of copies had been issued. This error might have been discovered by Galloway if he had followed Lincoln's suggestion to look at the proof-sheets "to exclude what you might think would embarrass the party."

Follett, Foster & Company not content with publishing the *Lincoln-Douglas Debates* and *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* by W. D. Howells, became interested in the publication of another campaign life to be written by J. Q. Howard. Returning from Springfield to Columbus, on June 7, Howard must have been intrigued with the idea of writing a "Life of Lincoln" himself. After Howells, for one reason or another, used so little of his material, he was likely able to sell the Columbus publishers on the idea.

Not wanting to get embroiled in another authorization argument, Howard inserted in his biography this statement:

"The following Sketch of the Life of Abraham Lincoln embraces simply the material facts in his history. Fictitious embellishments, to suit the varied imaginations of readers, are left to be supplied by the readers themselves. For whatever the sketch contains the writer alone is responsible. Columbus, O.; June 26, 1860."

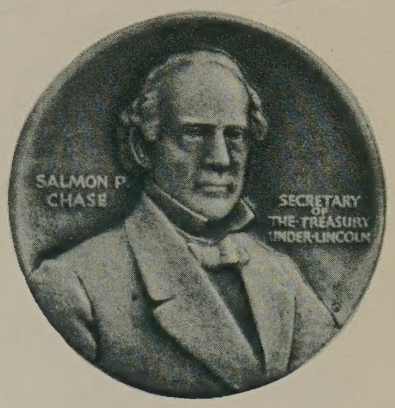
The Howard "Campaign Life" must have made a most inconspicuous appearance because it was unknown to Lincoln collectors until 1901, when the book-dealer Charles P. Everitt of New York City discovered a cache of "twenty-eight copies, of two different imprints, and one copy in German."

Copies of the Howard biography other than the "twenty-eight" have been discovered since 1901, although the book (Monaghan 42) is relatively rare. German editions (Monaghan 3736) are today found at Brown University, the Illinois State Historical Library, and Lincoln Memorial University.

Howells' Lincoln biography was the second of one hundred and three books, which he wrote during the years 1860 to 1920. However, his "Campaign Life" revealed little of his literary genius which later was to enable him to become the leader of "American letters" during the quarter century 1895 to 1920.

Howard became as obscure as his biography, and other of his literary productions did not bring renown to his name. Ernest James Wessen in his article "Campaign Lives of Abraham Lincoln 1860," published in *Papers In Illinois History and Transactions for the Year 1937-(8),* related how Everitt wrote Howard inquiring about his Lincoln book. Howard replied, "I suppose you want my autograph, if so send two dollars."

## UNITED STATES PAPER CURRENCY




**Salmon P. Chase**
**Secretary of The Treasury Under Lincoln**

United States paper currency bearing the portraits of Presidents, Secretaries of the Treasury and other officials is as follows:

| | *Portrait* | *Design on Back* |
|---|---|---|
| $1 | Washington—— | ONE between obverse and reverse of Great Seal |
| $2 | Jefferson—— | Monticello |
| $5 | Lincoln—— | Lincoln Memorial |
| $10 | Hamilton—— | U.S. Treasury Building |
| $20 | Jackson—— | White House |
| $50 | Grant—— | U.S. Capitol |
| $100 | Franklin—— | Independence Hall |
| $500 | McKinley—— | Ornate FIVE HUNDRED |
| $1,000 | Cleveland—— | Ornate ONE THOUSAND |
| $5,000 | Madison—— | Ornate FIVE THOUSAND |
| $10,000 | Chase—— | Ornate TEN THOUSAND |

The Lincoln portrait on the five dollar note (Meserve 85) was considered by Robert T. Lincoln, the President's son, to be the most satisfactory likeness of his father.

## RETRENCHMENT AND ECONOMY

When the news of Mr. Lincoln's nomination first reached Springfield, his friends rushed to his house, and asked him how many guns they should fire, whether one hundred or one for each State. "Well," said he, "I must begin my administration on the principle of retrenchment and economy. You had better fire but one gun for each State."

Lincoln and Liberty, Tract No. 2,
New York, June 26, 1860. M.62

## "WHO IS LINCOLN?"

The ablest lawyer in Illinois, and the smartest stump-speaker in the Union; an earnest and an honest man, who believes what he professes, and will carry out what he undertakes.—Senator Douglas.

Lincoln and Liberty, Tract No. 2,
New York, June 26, 1860 M.62

# STATUETTE OF LINCOLN

In the summer of 1877 in Port Marley, a little hamlet on the branch of the River Seine, two miles from St. Germain near Paris, Truman H. Bartlett sculptured a statuette of Abraham Lincoln.

The same year he exhibited the statuette in a Paris salon and it was purchased by a bronze chandelier manufacturing concern, Mitchell, Vance and Company. Brown University of Providence, Rhode Island, is the present owner of the plaster model. It is exhibited in a prominent place in their Lincoln library. It is believed that only one bronze statuette was cast by the foundry which is now the property of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

The statuette is thirty-nine inches tall and is signed by Bartlett with the date 1877. The foundry name of Mitchell, Vance and Co. is also inscribed on the base.

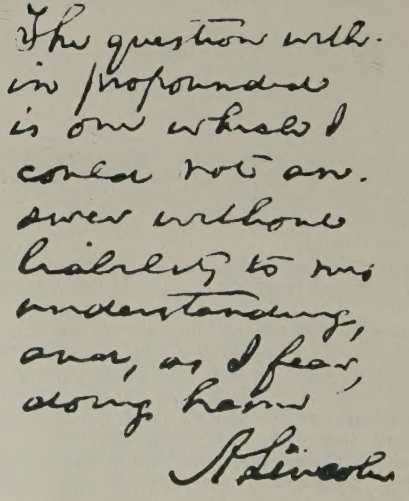
Eminent as a sculptor, and an authority on the life of Lincoln, Bartlett wrote a remarkable essay on "The Portraits of Lincoln" which appeared jointly with "A Biographical Essay" by Carl Schurz in a Houghton Mifflin (Riverside Press) publication in 1907 in an edition of 1,040 copies. This beautiful book was designed by Bruce Rogers.

During the summer of 1907 Bartlett tried to locate his statuette of Lincoln. The bronze foundry had lost all trace of their production and even the plaster model could not be found. Perhaps if it had been discovered Bartlett would have included it among the illustrations for his essay, "The Portraits of Lincoln."

The only photograph of the statuette ever published appeared in Luther Emerson Robinson's book *Abraham Lincoln—As A Man Of Letters*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1923. In a "Note on Illustrations" the author stated that "The Bartlett picture (facing page 192) is from a photograph of a bronze statuette of the President, made by Truman A. Bartlett and exhibited by him in Paris in 1877."

The quotation on the base of the statuette is "THAT THIS NATION, UNDER GOD, SHALL HAVE A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM; & THAT GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE BY THE PEOPLE & FOR THE PEOPLE SHALL NOT PERISH FROM THE EARTH."

## Legal Practitioner




"The question within propounded is one which I could not answer without liability to misunderstanding, and, as I fear, doing harm. — A. Lincoln"

This Lincoln note might well be described as "inflated, and obscure verbiage characteristic of the pronouncement of officialdom." The above quotation is Webster's (New Collegiate Dictionary) definition of "gobbledygook."

This original note is in the manuscript collection of The Lincoln National Life Foundation.